Mission Studies as Evangelization and Theology for World Christianity

Reflections on Mission Studies in Britain and Ireland, 2000 - 2015

Kirsteen Kim

DOI: 10.7252/Paper.000051

About the Author
Kirsteen Kim, Ph.D., is Professor of Theology and World Christianity at Leeds Trinity University. Kirsteen researches and teaches theology from the perspective of mission and world Christianity, drawing on her experience of Christianity while living and working in South Korea, India and the USA, with a special interest in theology of the Holy Spirit. She publishes widely and is the editor of Mission Studies, the journal of the International Association for Mission Studies.
Foreword

In 2000 and in 2012 I published papers for the British and Irish Association for Mission Studies (BIAMS) on mission studies in Britain and Ireland, which were published in journals of theological education.¹ These two papers surveyed the state of mission studies and how in this region it is related to various other disciplines. Each paper suggested a next stage in the development of mission studies: the first saw mission studies as facilitating a worldwide web of missiological discussion; the second suggested that mission studies should be appreciated as internationalizing theology more generally. This article reviews the developments in Britain and Ireland over the years which are detailed in these articles and bring them up to date. It further argues that, while continuing to develop as “mission studies” or “missiology”, the discipline should today claim the names “theology for world Christianity” and “studies in evangelization.

Introduction to a World-Wide Web (2000)

British and Irish Association for Mission Studies

In the 1984 Conference of ACATE, the Association of Adult Centres of Theological Education, that “every curriculum ought to find some place for the study of the theology of mission.”² In response to this call, The British and Irish Association for Mission Studies (BIAMS) was founded in 1989 to promote the study of mission as a recognized discipline within

---


theological education at the instigation of a consortium of Anglican mission agencies—Partnership for World Mission—and the General Synod Board for Mission and Unity of the Church of England. In the succeeding decade BIAMS made further links with universities, colleges and training institutions and strengthened its church connections through a close relationship with the Churches’ Commission on Mission, an ecumenical body. BIAMS drew together both practitioners and theorists of mission at biennial conferences interspersed with day conferences. It stimulated interest in mission studies by a twice-yearly Newsletter, website, and interest groups.

Mission studies as a theological and academic discipline

In a paper written with the help of the then BIAMS executive and published in 2000, I argued that mission studies was an established theological and academic discipline in the UK. It was represented in some shape or form in most theological colleges and in many university departments in Britain and Ireland. The main university centers were Birmingham, Edinburgh, and Cambridge. The University of Birmingham Department of Theology claimed to be the first in the country to focus on the study of mission and world Christianity and had the only chair of mission in Britain or Ireland. New College, University of Edinburgh claimed a double distinction in the history of mission studies. It was the venue for the great World Missionary Conference of 1910 and had what has been called “the first chair of mission studies anywhere in the Protestant world.” The Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western


5 BIAMS was constituted at Edinburgh in 1990, which reflected on mission studies in the light of Edinburgh 1910, eighty years before.

6 It was held jointly by the Department and the School of Mission at the Selly Oak Colleges. In 2000 the chair was occupied by Werner Ustorf and previously by Walter Hollenweger.

7 This was occupied by Alexander Duff (its architect) in 1867 but disappeared before the end of the century. Andrew Walls, “Missiological Education in Historical Perspective”, Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen and Edgar J. Elliston (eds.), Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the
World founded by Andrew Walls was based in the Faculty of Divinity. The Henry Martyn Centre, an associate institute of the Cambridge Theological Federation, was a foundational resource for research projects in the Faculty and for courses on mission and world Christianity taught in the University and Federation. There were substantial archives of mission societies in the UK concentrated principally at the Universities of London (SOAS), Leeds, Birmingham, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Oxford. Two academic journals of mission were being published: *Studies in World Christianity* at the University of Edinburgh and *Transformation*, “an international evangelical dialogue on mission and ethics” based at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. There were specialist publishers for mission studies: SPCK in the UK and Columba Press in Ireland.

**Mission studies and other disciplines**

No one had done more to establish mission studies as a theological and academic discipline than the South African missiologist David Bosch. Nearly a decade after its publication, Bosch’s *Transforming Mission* looked set to remain the indispensable *summa missiologica* and Bosch’s broad view of mission, “biblical, and systematic, and historical, and practical” was

---

*Circles and the Sandals* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 11-17. Duff’s chair was actually entitled “evangelistic theology” but Walls argues that the scope which Duff proposed for it corresponds to “missiology” today, pp. 12-13.

8 The director at that time was David Kerr.

9 Founding director Graham Kings.

10 The North Atlantic Missiology Project and Currents in World Christianity (1996-2001), both directed by Brian Stanley.

11 An indication of this is that in 1999 these universities received a joint grant of £415,000 from the Research Support Libraries Programme to accelerate, extend and improve access to their missionary collections.

12 On whose work the BIAMS conference at Lampeter in 1993 focused.

largely accepted. Nevertheless, uncertainty about the nature of mission lingered, together with questions about what constitutes mission studies and where it should fit in the theological curriculum.

Since the study of mission depended on interfaces with a wide range of disciplines, the paper surveyed the main partners of mission studies in the UK and Ireland to illustrate its scope, serve as an introduction to the subject, and show its importance to the theological curriculum. These were:

a) The interface with behavioral sciences and with communications when treated as evangelism, with the emphasis on the proclamation and translation of the message.

b) The use of social studies when missiology is a partner of development studies and it relates to social justice, peace studies and ecology, the prophetic voice of mission.

c) The historical study of missionary activity, which is a particular strength in the UK because of the presence of so many archives. Although of growing interest to secular historians, Timothy Yates argued it is best done by holding theology and history in tension.

d) The interface with religious studies and theology of religions. This was providing much of the impetus for study of mission in Britain because of rising awareness of the presence of significant numbers of people of other faiths.

---


15 The 1995 BIAMS conference “Mission on Trial” at Bearsden, Glasgow, asked whether the church was guilty of collusion in an unjust global economy and discussed how kerygma, koinonia, and diakonia can be held in creative inter-relationship in mission. Timothy Yates, Editorial, BLAMS Newsletter 6 (March 1996), 1-3.


17 This is clear from the case studies in Cracknell and Lamb, Theology on Full Alert.
e) The study of mission through cultural anthropology and cultural studies was seen as foundational to mission studies as missionaries have adapted themselves to other cultures and attempted to express the gospel in indigenous terms. Furthermore, the challenge of Lesslie Newbigin in the 1980s to “a genuinely missionary encounter” with modernity had raised the awareness of “our culture.”

f) The close relationship of missiology and ecumenics, with which at that time in Europe it was often twinned. This reflected the fact that the ecumenical movement grew out of the missionary movement and the insight of the *missio Dei* paradigm that mission results in ingathering.

g) The bringing together of mission and biblical studies, which had opened the way to studies of the biblical foundations for mission that did not depend merely on the Great Commission passages but on the thrust of Scripture as a whole. Mission studies was also conscious of the

---

18 The ambiguous relation of mission and cultures was recognized in the BIAMS conference at All Nations Christian College, Ware, in 1991 which looked at “Christ, Culture, and Columbus” and highlighted the necessity for a positive appreciation of cultural difference and the validity of other ways of life if mission is to be practiced in a Christ-like manner.

19 For a comprehensive study of inculturation by a British missiologist, see Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* (London: Chapman, 1988).


22 The importance of the missionary motif in biblical studies is recognized in the work of such contemporary British biblical scholars as Richard Bauckham, Christopher Rowland, and Christopher J. H. Wright.
re-reading of the Bible from non-Western contexts as developed in post-colonial interpretations or intercultural hermeneutics.23

Mission studies interfaced with systematic or dogmatic theology in both theology of mission and the development of a missionary theology.24 The study of Third World theologies25 or Non-Western theologies26 emerged naturally out of study of mission. It not only contained a critique of Western models of mission27 but suggested that the issues for theology in the new millennium would be pioneered outside the West.

**Mission studies and theological education**

I argued that, as a recognized discipline, mission studies should be a subject in the theological curriculum in its own right; it would be impoverished if reduced to one of its constituent parts or squeezed into a narrow section of the theological curriculum. Furthermore, “the dimensional aspect” of missiology, that is its task of highlighting theology’s reference to the world, means that a missionary perspective should also permeate all theological disciplines.28 And the questions raised by mission

---


24 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 492-96. The 1999 BIAMS conference at St Stephen’s College, Oxford, invited Jürgen Moltmann, a theologian with a missionary perspective, to what proved to be a very lively debate with Theo Sundermeier, a missiologist, on the theme “Mission—an Invitation to God’s Future”.

25 John Parratt, University of Birmingham.

26 Andrew Walls, University of Edinburgh.

27 Mention has already been made of Edinburgh’s C SCNWW and the recognition of the subject at the University of Birmingham. The University of Cambridge also had a Christianity in Asia Project (1997-2001). See Sebastian Kim (ed.), *Christian Theology in Asia* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008).

studies about the contextual nature of theology mean that missiology is party to the post-modern critique of theology, as Bosch demonstrated. In this sense missiology appeared to represent the future of theology. At the High Leigh conference (1984), Kenneth Cracknell and Christopher Lamb drew attention to what they saw as parochialism in British theology, “its enclosure within an exclusively European, not to say Anglo-Saxon, cultural framework” and the “timeless and uncontextualized” nature of much theology teaching. They had suggested that mission studies, by the boundary-breaking nature of mission itself, is an important factor in overcoming these limitations. In the newly electronically globalized era, I suggested that the study of mission is an introduction to a world-wide web. It is a subject which crosses theological and academic boundaries in its reflection on the mission of God to the world expressed in the living Word and the life-giving Spirit.

I concluded the article with the words of Orlando Costas, who highlighted the way in which missiology challenges mainstream theology:

Missiology contends against all theological provincialism, advocating an intercultural perspective in theology. Missiology questions all theological discourse that does not seriously consider the missionary streams of the Christian faith; all biblical interpretation that ignores the missionary motives that shape biblical faith; all history of Christianity that omits the expansion of Christianity across cultural, social, and religious frontiers; and all pastoral theology that does not take seriously the mandate to communicate the Gospel fully and to the heart of the concrete situations of daily life.... By fulfilling such a

29 Although whether Bosch’s paradigm was post-modern is questionable—see Kirsteen Kim, “Post-Modern Mission: A Paradigm Shift in David Bosch’s Theology of Mission?” International Review of Mission 89/353 (2000), 172-179.

30 Cracknell and Lamb, Theology on Full Alert, 8-15.
critical task, missiology also enriches theology because it puts theology in contact with the worldwide Church with all its cultural and theological diversity.31

Internationalizing Theology (2012)

In the twelve years between the first and second survey, the world had changed significantly. The first article was published before the events of 9/11 (2001), and the British equivalent 7/7 (2005), before the credit crunch and the Euro crisis, before the election of Barack Obama or David Cameron, and before China became the world’s second largest economy. Since mission is inextricably related to context, I argued, the changing global landscape must lead to changes in mission studies. Another important factor driving change in mission studies was the state of higher education in Britain and Ireland and the diminishing place of Christian theology within it. The second article aimed to update the earlier one and sketch the current state of mission studies in these nations in light of these developments as well as others which are more internal to the churches in these nations. The article looked at the changing nature of mission studies, the changing location of mission in the academy, and the changing content of mission studies.32 And, picking up from the conclusion of the earlier paper, it ended by asking whether and to what the extent mission studies and its changing nature impacted the teaching and study of theology in Britain and Ireland.


32 The author acknowledged the advice of Wonsuk Ma, Nigel Rooms and Cathy Ross in finalising this article.
Challenges and opportunities for mission studies

Decline of the study of mission as a focused subject

Since the year 2000, the place of mission studies in universities, colleges and research institutions had changed and relations between bodies had been reconfigured. University departments of theology continued the trend toward diversifying into “theology and religious studies”. Where there had been integration between the two disciplines, the Christian input developed into Christian studies and theology was no longer only Christian theology. Amid continued political anxiety to identify common ground among the religions, the missionary dimensions of faiths tended to be neglected. Mission studies seemed to have lost its (admittedly tenuous) foothold as a distinct discipline. The Centre for Mission Studies at the University of Birmingham, a legacy of the Selly Oak Colleges had closed and the chair in mission was not occupied. Two Catholic centers for mission studies had closed: the Missionary Institute London, which was affiliated to the Universities of Middlesex and Leuven, and Kimmage Mission Institute, Dublin. The University of Leeds, which during the time of Adrian Hastings produced many doctorates in mission and world Christianity, no longer reflected that orientation. However, there were still bright spots. The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies had been revived by Wonsuk Ma and continued to attract students for postgraduate degrees, but most were from overseas and this power house of global mission thinking was not really engaged with the British churches. The Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College, Dublin specialized in the world mission-related topics of intercultural theology and interreligious studies, international peace studies, and conflict resolution and reconciliation. The number of masters
programs in mission validated by universities had actually increased.\textsuperscript{33} Much of this was driven by the growth of church-planting initiatives. This suggested that in the colleges training for Christian ministry mission studies was increasingly mainstream.\textsuperscript{34}

Shift from world mission to local mission

The most noteworthy change in the nature of mission studies was that in the space of less than twenty years the meaning of the word “mission” in the British churches had gone from being used almost exclusively for overseas work to referring primarily to the outreach work of local churches in Britain. The British and Irish Association for Mission Studies (BIAMS) was founded in 1989 to study the history, theology and practice of mission and to encourage awareness of the major issues in contemporary mission. BIAMS was to serve a consortium of churches and mission agencies, which were known for their activities overseas, so when its constitution was approved the following year no one thought to specify that the study of mission should have a global dimension – that was a given. Yet only fifteen years later, under the influence particularly of the Gospel in Our Culture Network and the missional church movement, the use of the word “mission” in Britain had become so focused on the local context that a global interest could no longer be taken for granted. Moreover, the long-term decline in missionary sending and the problems of the partnership model had led to the demise of the umbrella bodies that had founded BIAMS. In order to try to hold together local mission in Britain and the

\textsuperscript{33} These included Redcliffe College, Gloucester; Cliff College, Derbyshire; Springdale College, Selly Oak; All Nations Christian College, Ware; the Queen’s Foundation, Birmingham; Trinity College Bristol.

\textsuperscript{34} The author verified this in the case of the six colleges affiliated to Queen’s University Belfast, the Queen’s Foundation in Birmingham, the Yorkshire Ministry Course based at Mirfield, St Michael’s Llandaff, and Ripon College Cuddesdon. Further evidence is the publication by the main specialist theology publisher, SCM, of Stephen Spencer, Christian Mission: SCM Study Guide (London: SCM Press, 2007).
wider world church, at its conference in 2005, BIAMS found it necessary to amend its Constitution by including “worldwide” in the description of mission.

**Mission and world Christianity**

Although mission studies had declined in the universities, “world Christianity” was proving acceptable because it did not have the same colonial baggage as “mission.” Mission studies that takes its global context seriously is clearly linked to the study of world Christianity. However, there is a danger that the study of world Christianity is presented as the successor to mission studies because it is seen as the fruit of colonial missions which had planted churches in every continent. I argued that mission, and its study, continues to be highly relevant even in the era of world Christianity for two main reasons. First, because world Christianity is not just the result of recent missionary expansion but is a phenomenon that goes back into the New Testament which brings together documents – such as the four Gospels – from a wide geographical area. Second because mission itself has never been entirely a Northern or colonial phenomenon. Every church has its own missionary activity, and world mission is now well established from populous Christian nations in the global South and East, such as Nigeria, Brazil, and Korea.

The prominence of “world Christianity” in Britain and Ireland and elsewhere was largely due to the work of Andrew Walls at Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Princeton, and Liverpool Hope University. There was other significant discussion of the nature and significance of “world Christianity”

emanating from the UK context in this period. In 2008, Liverpool Hope University launched a new Andrew F. Walls Centre for the Study of Asian and African Christianity directed by Daniel Jeyaraj, Professor of World Christianity, with significant archives. The former Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World at the University of Edinburgh had reduced somewhat in size but continued to attract postgraduate students as the Centre for the Study of World Christianity, led by Brian Stanley. The Henry Martyn Centre in Cambridge under Emma Wildwood, and soon to be renamed the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide, continued to contribute to the teaching of mission to the Cambridge Theological Federation and to develop its important library of books and journals related to mission and world Christianity. Two leading scholars of the sociology of religion in England were treating Christianity in global perspective: Grace Davie at the University of Exeter and Linda Woodhead at the University of Lancaster.

Edinburgh 1910 centenary project

Probably the most significant event in mission studies in the intervening decade was the centenary of the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh 1910. The research done for the conference a century ago was one of the earliest examples of mission studies and one of the main reasons why Edinburgh 1910 is remembered a century later. Encouraged by the World Council of Churches, for which the Edinburgh conference was a historical milestone, the anniversary project was constructed to highlight

important mission-related developments over that period: the growth of the ecumenical movement, the rise of awareness of world Christianity, and the consensus around the *missio Dei* paradigm.

The commemoration of Edinburgh 1910 by the Edinburgh 2010 project and conference at the University of Edinburgh was a great but largely unrealized opportunity for mission studies in Britain and Ireland. Brian Stanley, Professor of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh, produced the definitive history of the 1910 conference and the preparatory volumes and conference report were published by Regnum Books International as part of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series. Although Edinburgh 2010 was a truly global project involving Christians from every region of the world and leaders of global church and mission bodies, British-based missiologists and institutions were very well

---

37 In contrast to 1910, Edinburgh 2010 was not a gathering of Protestants only; its governing body included all the main streams of world Christianity—Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Protestant, demonstrating the great strides in ecumenical cooperation in mission. See the Common Call, available at www.edinburgh2010.org.

38 The composition of the research network and conference delegations was intended to include 60 per cent from the global South to represent the proportions identified in Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross (eds.), *The Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

39 This stood for the post-war and post-colonial insight that mission does not belong to the churches but is God’s initiative in which we are called to participate in humility and hope. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, republished in 2011, was taken as still the best exposition of this.


represented in the research project. However, the benefits of hosting the project were not as great as they could have been because of the weakened infrastructure for mission studies and also the tensions between the nations within the United Kingdom.

Changing content of mission studies

In 2012, I found that mission studies was not so much a focus for inter-disciplinary work but rather was carried on under various other headings, particularly ecclesiology, culture, spirituality, interfaith relations, development studies, public affairs, eco-theology and the study of migration.

Mission-shaped church

Undoubtedly the widest and most intense discussion around mission in the first decade of the new century was generated by Mission-shaped Church, the report of the Mission and Public Affairs Council of the Church of England in 2004, which called for “a new inculturation of the gospel within our society.” Reflection on national social trends led the writers of Mission-shaped Church to endorse work already being done in planting churches among networks rather than necessarily in geographically defined locations. And their observation that consumerism is a metaphor for much of contemporary Western culture led them to argue that to reach out in consumer society the church must reshape itself around worshippers as consumers. These were the main reasons for encouraging “fresh expressions of church,” a movement which had now diversified

---

42 British-based missiologists were very well represented in the research project in its inception (Ken Ross), on its steering group (Rose Dowsett, John Kafwanka, Wonsuk Ma), as research coordinator (Kirsteen Kim), and as co-conveners of six out of the nine study themes (Janice Price, Andrew Kirk, Mark Oxbrow, Afe Adogame, Darrell Jackson, Wonsuk Ma and Cathy Ross).


to cover all sorts of experiments with new ways of being church plus emerging churches of all sorts. The original *Mission-shaped Church* report and Fresh Expressions were endorsed and developed\textsuperscript{45} and also criticized from many angles.\textsuperscript{46} Some of the concerns were, first, that mission studies is in danger of being reduced to social and cultural anthropology without its ethical, historical, and theological dimensions; second, that the mission-shaped church approach may lead to multiplying churches to compete for “customers” in a way that is contrary to the spirit of Christian unity, or to the “McDonaldization” of the gospel and the church for the sake of the efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control so valued in the market;\textsuperscript{47} and third, that the original report assumed a homogenous English culture and paid little attention to ethnic minorities or to social inequality, both of which are issues that a rounded study of mission should include. However the report did help to establish is the missionary nature of the local church and ensured that mission studies is represented in this way in most places where training for ministry takes place.

**Mission and culture**

Despite criticism of mission-shaped church, attention to the relationship of mission and culture continued, and probably the chief dialogue partners of mission studies in 2012 were cultural studies and postcolonial thought. This dialogue resulted in a variety of different


approaches. Most of these were represented in the wide-ranging lecture series of the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture at Regent’s Park College. At the University of Birmingham many mission-related studies were carried out under the heading “intercultural studies” or using the post-colonial approaches pioneered by R.S. Sugirtharajah at Selly Oak and the University of Birmingham. Black theology was represented by Anthony Reddie, then at the Queen’s Foundation, Birmingham. Gordon Lynch, at the University of Kent, looked at the interface of religion with postmodern and popular culture. David Kettle, who led the Gospel and Our Culture Network, built on the work of Lesslie Newbigin to challenge Western culture in general. Anne Richards led the Mission Theological Advisory Group of the Church of England and Churches Together to take postmodern and popular culture seriously and approach them sympathetically through contact points with spirituality. After the attention given to Celtic spirituality in the 1980s and 90s, recent missional attention was being given English culture. Christianity and Culture, directed by Dee Dyas of St John’s Nottingham and the University


of York, explored the influence of Christianity in English culture through history. Nigel Rooms from Nottingham looked at contemporary English culture with a view to integrating, or re-integrating, the gospel with it.

**Mission spirituality and pneumatology**

At the turn of the millennium, spirituality and mission was a current area of interest in BIAMS. In 2004 the results of a major research project led by Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead at Lancaster University caused a stir in the press when they showed there was a shift from “religion” to “spirituality”; that is, away from belief in a system expressed through membership of a congregation and toward individual pursuit of subjective experience especially through alternative “holistic,” therapeutic religious experience of a neo-Pagan or New Age type. Some Fresh Expressions and other creative ways of being church were included in the Heelas-Woodhead definition of spirituality. Steve Hollinghurst at the Sheffield Centre was

---


doing mission studies in relation to such post-Christian groups.\textsuperscript{58} Since, holistic spiritualities involve a new relationship to the creation and the natural world, eco-theologies and a mission of environmental justice were being developed, particularly by Celia Deane-Drummond, then at the University of Chester, and David Bookless of A Rocha, who both spoke at the BIAMS day conference in 2007.\textsuperscript{59}

Interest in God in creation and in spiritual experience and spirituality were two reasons for increased attention to the Holy Spirit and to pneumatological perspectives in mission studies. Another reason is the rise of Pentecostal and charismatic perspectives in the study of mission, culture, and practical theology. The latter was reflected particularly at the Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, University of Birmingham and in the work of Allan Anderson, Mark Cartledge, and Andrew Smith there. A noticeable shift had taken place in the \textit{missio Dei} paradigm, which was first expressed as “partnership in Christ” but which had now become “finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in”.\textsuperscript{60} As Andrew Lord explained, holistic mission is “Spirit-shaped mission”.\textsuperscript{61}

**Mission, evangelism and other faiths**

Although the growing presence of non-Christian faiths had provided impetus for the establishment of BIAMS, most Christian involvement with them was now separated from mission studies under the heading


of interfaith or dialogue. However, after 9/11 and 7/7 called government policy of multi-culturalism into question, there developed a more robust dialogue and it was recognized that prophesy and proclamation—from all sides—has a place in inter-religious relations. A Church of England report in 2005 advocated a closer relationship between mission, evangelism and dialogue through Presence and Engagement. There was growing recognition that religions may be in mission toward one another and in a new willingness to learn from the long experience of many churches outside the West, who have lived as minorities in nations dominated by other faiths, about how to engage with different religions.

### Mission and economic justice

In the post-colonial era the work done by missionary societies in education, medical care and other aspects of human well-being, which was such a large part of their work before the Second World War, was mostly transferred to governments, development agencies and other secular bodies. In the secularist environment since then, Christian mission organizations which engage in development activities were sometimes tarred with suspicion that they may be using this as a cover for church

[www.wcc-coe.org. See also Kim, *Joining in with the Spirit.*](#)

62 Israel Selvanayagam, then principal of the United College of the Ascension, drawing on his Indian experience, always insisted that evangelism and dialogue were inseparable. E.g. Israel Selvanayagam, *A Second Call: Ministry and Mission in a Multifaith Milieu* (Madras: CLS, 2000), 338-53.


65 E.g. Heythrop College and CTBI jointly hosted a colloquium in 2011 on “Globalised Christianity and Inter Faith Engagement: Implications for Theological Reflection in Britain and Ireland” at Heythrop College.
expansion or inducing people to convert for ulterior motives. In such a climate it was a struggle to maintain a holistic approach in mission. But the first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed something of a change in attitude as represented, for example, by the Religions and Development project of the International Development Department of the University of Birmingham, which was funded by the government Department for International Development to explore “the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction.” The project showed the extent to which, in the Christian case, mission agencies and churches themselves are agents of development and it encouraged a partnership of faith-based organizations with government bodies. Similarly within the UK, successive governments encouraged faith-based social initiatives for a number of political reasons. In view of mission history, mission studies has a critical role to play vis-à-vis such policies. In the Jubilee 2000 and Make Poverty History (2005) campaigns, the UK led the world in this respect as mission organizations and development agencies came together with churches and faith groups to exert considerable political pressure on the world’s political leaders meeting as the G8 to address questions of debt and poverty. In view of the current economic crisis, I argued, it was more necessary than ever that mission studies address itself to questions of economic justice.

Mission, public theology, and reconciliation

In first decade of the twenty-first century “public theology” emerged as a missional interface with public affairs, politics, and civil society: “Public theology is an engagement of living religious traditions with their public environment—the economic, political and cultural spheres of common life.” The Global Network for Public Theology included a disproportionate number of institutions and centers in the UK.

66 See www.religionsanddevelopment.org.


68 Centre for the Study of Religion and Politics, University of St Andrews; Centre for Theology and Public Issues, University of Edinburgh; Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin; Manchester Centre for Public Theology, University of Manchester; University of Exeter Network for First Fruits
There were also specialist institutions, such as the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity and the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics, Cambridge and a number of Christian public theology think-tanks such as Theos and Ekklesia, which aimed to bring theology to public life. Public theology is less adversarial than the political theology which arose in the 1960s or the liberation theologies of the 1970s and 1980s. One of the main contributions of theology in the public sphere was to work for reconciliation in society on the basis of the reconciliation in Christ. Reflection on mission as reconciliation was particularly developed in Ireland by theologians from different communities. It was the subject of the BIAMS conference in Belfast in 2003. Reconciliation was the focus of a conference at York St. John University (which is part of an ongoing worldwide series) and a series of seminars at the United College of the Ascension.

Mission and migration

The Wallsian “shift in the center of gravity of Christianity” heightened the importance of dialogue with theologies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America but still this tended to be treated as an exotic optional extra in theological studies. In the past decade such dialogue had become less of a choice as more and more churches from the global south and east migrated to the UK. The relevance of studies of migration to mission studies was recognized particularly by Afe Adogame at the University of Edinburgh Religion and Public Life; and York St. John University. Luke Bretherton also made an important contribution at King’s College London: Luke Bretherton, Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).


and Emma Wild-Wood in Cambridge, and BIAMS focused on this at its conference in 2007. I pointed out that in a globalized world what is going on “out there” cannot be ignored because sooner or later it will also be here and therefore “world church and local mission” need to be more closely connected. The greatest blind-spot in mission studies has always been reflection on the West as part of the global community, and this is a legacy of colonialism. The mission-shaped church debate, for example, failed to recognize the “migrant churches” that would be identified just a few years later as important examples of new and emerging churches. Since the end of the colonial period, Europe has also been recognized as a mission field and it is now being treated as such not only by North Americans but also by the agents of what has been termed “reverse mission”. I concluded that mission studies needed to do more to interface with global or international affairs in order to understand the global significance of mission movements and their local implications for churches. Above all, understanding the United States, its impact on the world and these nations in particular, and its influence on our practice of Christianity, should be an important part of mission studies. The reflections of migrants and reverse missionaries, who see Britain and Ireland from outsider perspectives, enriches mission studies by setting the discourse within a wider context and helping us to see ourselves as others do.

Further Developments in Mission Studies (2015)

In the three years since 2012, there have been further significant changes in the landscape of mission studies. As we increasingly see ourselves in contemporary Britain and Ireland as in a missional context, insights from mission studies have become more relevant and have permeated the rest of


73 Kim, Joining in with the Spirit.


75 There are many reflective papers on mission in the UK from outsider perspectives posted on the Rethinking Mission website created by USPG, www.rethinkingmission.org.uk.
theological curriculum. However, alongside a decline in institutional church life, the study of academic theology of any kind has continued a long decline. This is most marked at undergraduate level; postgraduate numbers are more resilient. This has affected interest in mission studies in two main ways: first, it is a victim of its own success in that mission is no longer distinguishable from other church activities; second, the shift of interest in mission to the local church has tended to benefit the study of practical theology rather than mission studies. The effect of both activities combined was that, in 2014, BIAMS accepted an invitation to become a network within the British and Irish Association for Practical Theology (BIAPT) and ceased to exist as a separate entity. So where does that leave missiology in Britain and Ireland? I have shown that the permeation of aspects of mission studies in theological studies is greater than ever before but the focused study of mission, particularly in its global dimensions, is struggling. In this situation, I suggest two further ways in which interest in mission studies can be maintained and re-ignited: missiology as theology for world Christianity and missiology as the study of evangelization.

Missiology as theology for world Christianity

Given the continued interest in “world Christianity,” while continuing to develop as “mission studies” or “missiology,” mission studies should today claim to the name “theology for world Christianity.” I concluded the 2012 article with a plea that studies of mission and world Christianity would continue to enhance and diversify the theological curriculum leading to its genuine internalization so that it reflects the reality of our nations and that Britain and Ireland are part of world Christianity. The shift in the center of Christianity away from Europe is changing the churches in Britain and Ireland. This is seen, for example, by the way the shape and authority structures of the Anglican Communion have been challenged on issues of human sexuality, for example by the church in Nigeria, which has significantly more practicing Christians than the English church. The presence of so many “migrant churches” in these islands is also a challenge to assumptions that there is a normative form of Christianity here, which

---

76 Kim, Joining in with the Spirit.

77 For insight into the issues, see Terry Brown (ed), Other Voices, Other Worlds: The Global Church Speaks Out on Homosexuality (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006).
is also a global norm, and to which newcomers need to be assimilated. The evidence that we are part of world Christianity should make an impact on theological education which is both profound and broad. We can no longer assume that our students were formed here or that their ministry will be to a settled population originating in these nations and sharing the same culture (if that assumption was ever true). We have a multi-cultural Christian community which is in touch with, and open to, global trends in theology and practice.

The rise in interest in world Christianity attests to a growing awareness of the importance of global perspectives and recognition of the interconnectedness of Christian movements across the world. Philip Jenkins, another influential (originally) British scholar in the field, drew attention to the significance of this for theology when he wrote: “All too often statements about what ‘modern Christians accept’ or ‘what Catholics today believe’ refer only to what that ever-shrinking remnant of Western Christians and Catholics believe. Such assertions are outrageous today, and as time goes by they will become ever further removed from reality.”

We do not yet see in Britain and Ireland significant change in the teaching of theology, although Regnum Books International has been responding to this challenge for several years. It should be the case that practical theology takes account of global affairs; biblical studies interfaces with cultural, postcolonial, and religious studies; church history recognizes simultaneous histories of different regions of the world; and dogmatic or systematic theology engages African, Asian, and Indigenous philosophies and theologies. The church is moving in migration and mission and so theology also needs to move beyond recounting and developing the Western tradition toward much greater engagement with theologies emerging from other contexts. Missiology, by its nature, has important resources to inform the debate about how the teaching of theology responds to these challenges. It can facilitate the internationalization of theology and global theological conversation.

---


79 Regnum Books International publishes on mission, global Christianity, resources for mission and also includes the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series. See www.ocms.org.uk/regnum.

Missiology as the study of evangelization

The *missio Dei* paradigm, in which all human missions are thought of as part of the one mission of God, has formed the theological foundation for ecumenical mission studies since the 1950s. It was given its fullest development in David Bosch’s work, *Transforming Mission*. However, there is increasing theological and missiological discontent with the “paradigm” of *missio Dei*. The extension of *missio Dei* to suggest that God’s work in the world might bypass the church was challenged by Bosch. Furthermore, much *missio Dei* theology is a form of the social Trinity, a model which has been heavily criticized as ideologically constructed. The World Council of Churches’ statement *Together towards Life* overcame the separation of the immanent and economic Trinity in *missio Dei* formulations by focusing instead on the mission of the Spirit. Missiologically, the *missio Dei* paradigm was established in the very different context of the Cold War as a way of responding to the limitations on horizontal sending in that era and it was developed in the 1960s to justify mission as a secular development movement. It has encouraged biblical reflection on mission and conception of the church as missional. But it also implicitly

---


82 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 381–89.


84 For in-depth study of the origins of the *missio Dei* paradigm, see Flett, *The Witness of God*.

discourages horizontal or geographical sending. Moreover, *missio Dei* has been appealed to for so many causes as to render Bosch’s “consensus” largely meaningless.

Since at least Edinburgh 1910, an alternative and often synonymous term to mission has been “evangelization.” From a biblical studies perspective, evangelization—“proclaiming” or “effecting” good news—could be regarded as the Lukan version (Luke 4:18) of the Johannine mission—“sending” (John 3:16; 20:21). Whereas mission theology starts from above with the sending of Christ, evangelization starts from below by following the example of Jesus Christ. Long before the shift away from “missions” as activities of the church to “mission” to refer to God’s sending, Protestants in 1910 used evangelization in a holistic way. In 1975, Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* adopted this term to describe a broad missional agenda and in 2013 Pope Francis revived its use in *Evangelii Gaudium*, also in a broad sense that covers most of what is discussed under mission in Protestant circles. The publication of *Evangelii Gaudium* presents an opportunity to bring the two parts of the Western church together for renewed discussion on mission under the heading of evangelization. Furthermore, since the term “gospel” is embedded in it, use of evangelization helps to identify the Christian agenda in an era when “mission” is used by all sorts of organizations, businesses, and so on. Certainly in the UK *Evangelii Gaudium* has awakened interest in mission themes.

86 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI following the third assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1974 (1975; available from www.vatican.va).


88 I concede that the connection with “good news” is lost on most English speakers but it is more obvious in other languages.

In conclusion, although study of mission as a discipline in its own right has declined in the UK and Ireland since 2000, the themes and insights of mission studies are increasingly found in ministerial training and in studies of world Christianity. They have the potential to internationalize theology, but this is not yet realized, and there is an opportunity to revive mission as evangelization. The term “mission” is popular in the churches but may be toxic in academic settings. The challenge is, on the one hand, to keep ministerial training in touch with developments in the academy and the wider world and, on the other, to maintain relationships between the study of religion at secular universities and what actually happens in churches. In other words, it is to hold together the study of local mission or evangelization and research on world Christianity and theology worldwide.